

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Community Solar and HEAP



Below you will find frequently asked questions about community solar subscriptions for customers in receipt of Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) benefits.

### **What is the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)?**

HEAP is a federally-funded program administered by New York State. The program is intended to assist low income households in meeting their immediate home energy needs. Two types of assistance available through HEAP are Regular and Emergency benefits, which vary in amount based on the household's heating fuel source, whether the household is directly responsible for the heating bill, and other criteria.

The Regular benefit is a one-time supplemental payment designed to decrease a household's energy burden. Households that have electric heating systems and/or pay their own electric bills have HEAP bill assistance paid directly to their electric utility vendor.

Receipt of HEAP benefits depends annually on availability of the federal funding and household eligibility. For more information on HEAP, visit <http://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/>

### **If a customer in receipt of HEAP has a community solar subscription, will this change the household's eligibility for *Regular* HEAP benefits?**

No. Receipt of monetary utility bill credits and any reduction in annual utility costs resulting from enrollment in a community solar subscription is not currently included in eligibility considerations when a household applies for HEAP or reapplies for a Regular HEAP benefit in subsequent years.

If a HEAP-eligible or a HEAP-recipient household has entered into a community solar subscription contract that requires direct payment of subscription fees to a community solar provider, that payment obligation will not be considered a utility expense and will not be considered in the household's eligibility for HEAP benefits.

### **If a customer in receipt of HEAP has a community solar subscription, will this change the household's eligibility for *Emergency* HEAP benefits?**

Yes, in certain cases. If a HEAP-eligible or HEAP-participating household paying directly for electric heat has enrolled in a community solar subscription which provides monthly monetary bill credits sufficient to prevent the customer's account from reaching shut-off notice status, the household will not be eligible for Emergency HEAP benefits.

### **Can a community solar subscription for an electric heat customer, which would reduce the monthly utility bill to zero, cause any HEAP benefits received to "roll over"?**

No. When paid directly to the household's electric utility vendor, the HEAP benefit will be applied to the active account balance before monetary credits from a community solar subscription are applied. Currently any HEAP benefit credit remaining on the utility account will be applied to the customer's new bill for consumption each month before monetary credits from community solar are applied to the bill. For electric heat households, receiving a HEAP benefit may therefore result in higher than expected rollover of community solar credits.

### **What information should be provided to a customer in receipt of HEAP before they sign a contract for a community solar subscription?**

Customers should be provided with all disclosures required by the Uniform Business Practices for DER Suppliers and the DER Oversight Order. Like all community solar customers, customers in receipt of HEAP considering a community solar subscription which will require them to make payments to a community solar provider should consider cost and savings information, and all other consumer disclosures, in their decision to sign a contract.

Although future HEAP benefits are not guaranteed, community solar providers and households with electric heat who are in receipt of a HEAP benefit should be aware of the potential for community solar credit rollover due to receipt of that HEAP benefit.

### **Can a provider of a community solar subscription (or rooftop solar lease) be considered a participating HEAP vendor?**

No. Community solar providers are not considered participating vendors for the purposes of payment of HEAP benefits.

If a HEAP-eligible or HEAP-recipient household enters a community solar subscription contract that requires payment of subscription fees to a solar provider, the household/customer will be solely responsible for meeting the payment obligations to the community solar provider.